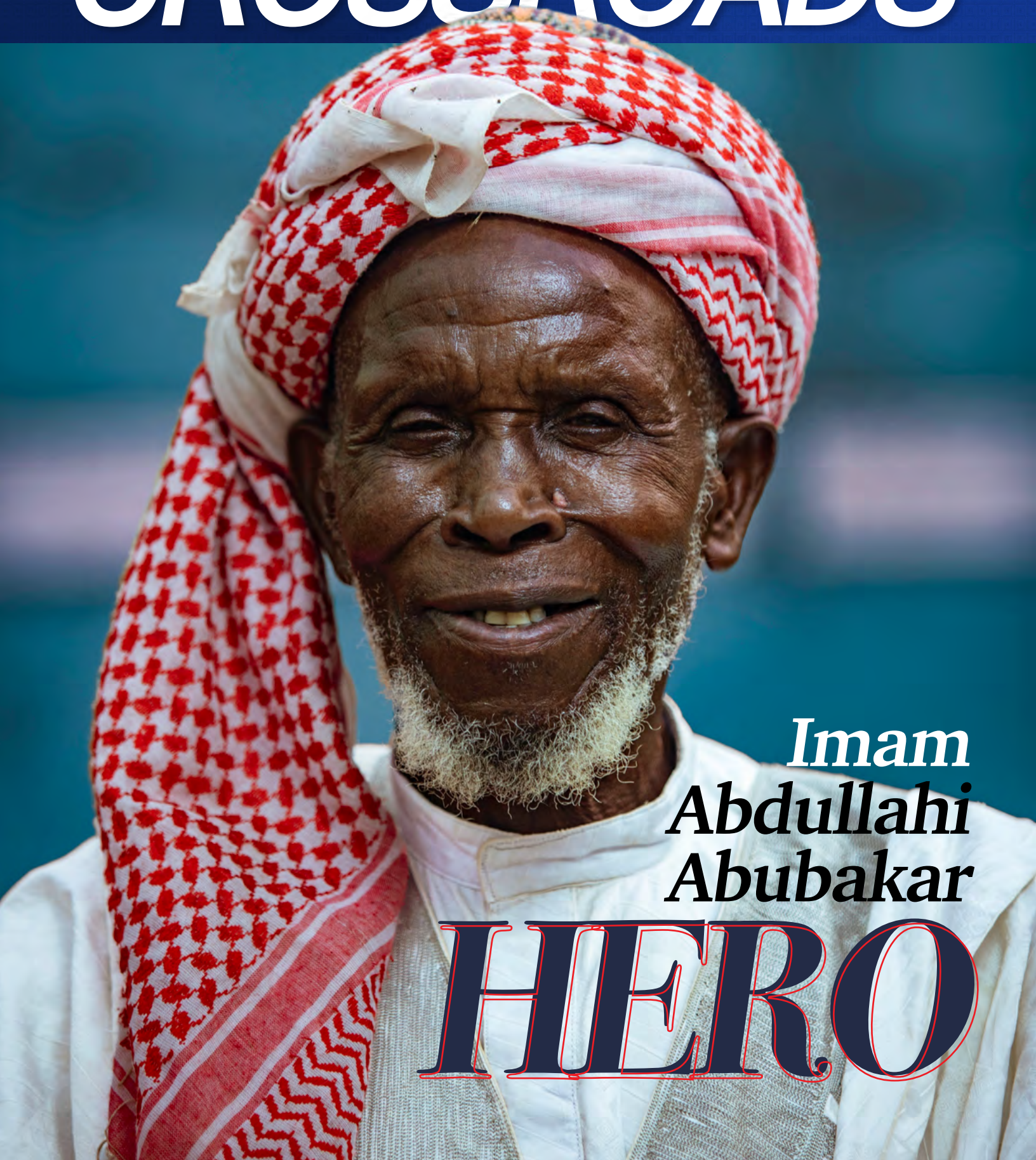


April/May 2019

A publication of the U.S. Mission in Nigeria

CROSSROADS



**Imam
Abdullahi
Abubakar**

HERO

Film Screening: SOWING HOPE

National Film Institute, Jos | April 9, 2019



Kenneth Gyang, director of *Sowing Hope*, and David Young, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Mission Nigeria pose on the red carpet



Kenneth Gyang, director of *Sowing Hope* addresses the audience before the film screening begins



A cross section of VIPs engrossed in the film



A member of the audience delivers commentary during the Q&A session



Panelists: Godwin Okoko, Country Director, Apurimac Onlus, and Sarah Nanpon of IFES, during the panel discussion moderated by David Young



An emotion-laden Imam Abdullahi Abubakar, who is the subject of the film, delivers remarks to rousing applause



W. Stuart Symington
U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria

Welcome to another edition of Crossroads.

We share the conviction of all those Nigerians who are strong advocates of democracy and of the freedom that democracy brings to choose our own leaders. In this issue, we will look at some of the ways the U.S.

Mission to Nigeria supported that democratic spirit in the Nigerian people during the recently concluded 2019 general elections. We provided training, observation and monitoring, and we worked with civil society organizations to ensure transparency and accountability for acts of violence. As we often stated during the campaign, we supported the democratic process itself, not a candidate or a party.

On the cover page we celebrate the heroic bravery of Abdullahi Abubakar, a humble Imam serving and leading in the hills of Plateau state. You will see how the Imam's actions saved the lives of hundreds of his Christian neighbors. The Imam's selfless actions reflect his vision that all of us are brethren. He embodies the motto of the United States, the idea at the heart of America: Out of Many, One. That idea resonates as strongly in Nigeria as any place on earth. His life is an inspiration; his story a perfect illustration of that undeniable truth that we need to take care of all of us and create paths forward for every person, regardless of what we speak, where we pray, what gender we are,

who we love, or how we make our living.

We also highlight the events we celebrated during Black History Month in February, and Women's History Month in March. The United States invest daily in building the human capital of Nigeria, and no area for investment is more vital than health. Please look for information inside on our support for the Nigeria HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAIIS). That was the largest such survey ever done anywhere in the world. The results show the progress made fighting this disease in many places and the gaps where we need to do more to end the HIV epidemic in Nigeria.

These stories and more await you on the following pages. Taken together, I think they are vivid proof of our success working together to make a brighter future for all Nigerians, a future Made in Nigeria and Made with America.

Enjoy the read.

W. Stuart Symington

CROSSROADS

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Aruna Amirthanayagam
(Counselor for Public Affairs)
Russell Brooks
(Public Affairs Officer, Lagos)
Glenn Guimond
(Press Attaché)
Olaoluwa Aworinde
(Editor & photographer)

Address all correspondence to:

The Editor, Crossroads Magazine
Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy
Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive,
Central Business Area, Abuja, Nigeria
Tel: (09) 461-4000. Fax: 09-461-4305

LAGOS OFFICE:

U.S. Consulate General, Public Affairs
2, Walter Carington Crescent, Lagos
Tel.: +234-703-150-4867/2444
E-mail: crossroads@state.gov
Website: nigeria.usembassy.gov

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In This Issue...

Vol. 25 No. 1



An Election Observer Reports

Pg 4



Nigerian Democracy

Pg 6

Beyond Voting: What Next?

Pg 9



Cover Story

Pg 10



The YALI Contribution

Pg 12



Aspilos Foundation

Pg 13

NAIIS 2018

Pg 14



Women's History Month

Pg 16

Through the Eyes of an Election Observer

By Temitayo Famutimi

Richard is an accomplished Lagos-based realtor. He travelled to his village in Aniocha North Local Government Area, Delta State ahead of the February 16 presidential election. Excited, he hardly slept throughout the night of February 15. He got out of bed at dawn to hear the shocking news; barely five hours to the commencement of the election, the electoral umpire had postponed the exercise by a week.

Richard was disappointed by the shift in elections. Nevertheless, he extended his stay in the village by an extra three weeks to ensure his participation in both the delayed presidential vote and the upcoming gubernatorial election.

"I have consistently voted since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999. This year won't be an exception", he told me.

Richard is one of the many patriotic Nigerians who travelled across the country to take part in the election. In fact, there were reports of Nigerians who returned to the country from North America, Europe, and Asia to participate in the elections.

Filled with zeal and a consummate passion to let their voices be heard, Richard and a couple of other villagers arrived at the polling unit as early as 6:30 a.m. However, electoral materials and officials didn't arrive until 8:15 a.m. Voting eventually started around 9:10 a.m.

In Asaba, the Delta State capital, voting did not start in a couple of places until 11 a.m. At the Uzoigwe Primary School, a Registration Area Centre housing over a dozen polling units, hundreds of voters were disappointed by the late start of voting.

Numerous card readers were not working. Scores of agitated voters, both young and old, were seen seeking out domestic and international observers to express their dissatisfaction. One gentleman with whom our team spoke, yelled "No one is leaving until we all vote."

Determined to exercise their franchise, a broad section of the citizenry across the country fought tooth and nail to cast their ballots.

Despite the late opening of polls, which marred the first leg of the 2019 general elections, Nigerians underscored the importance of the gubernatorial and state-level legislative elections by a slight increase in voter turnout as compared to the presidential election. State governments are seen as the tier of government that enact policies which impact the daily lives of citizens the most.

In one of the polling units in Sagamu LGA of Ogun State, voters grabbed chairs from a nearby elementary school and sat in long lines. They were all armed with umbrellas for protection from the scorching hot sun.

The atmosphere was generally calm but with a notable security presence. With the gubernatorial election fiercely contested in the state, the role of traditional leaders in maintaining the peace became imperative.

Our team learnt that prominent traditional leaders held town hall meetings with their subjects urging them to collaborate with the Independent National Electoral Commission and the police to keep the peace.

Two days to the gubernatorial election, the traditional leaders in Sagamu were said to have performed a series of rituals that successfully scared off miscreants, potential ballot box snatchers and troublemakers.

At a polling unit in Ikenne Local Government Area in Ogun State, one of the assistant polling officers was seen assisting an octogenarian man just after performing his civic duty. It was observed that pregnant women and persons living with disabilities were given priority to vote across several polling units.

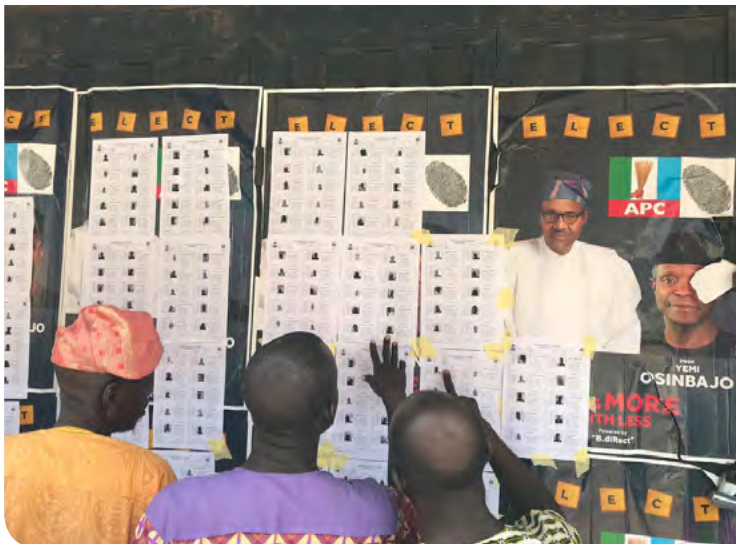
However, there were still significant impediments to voting for persons living with disabilities and the aged, as many polling units remain inaccessible to these categories of voters. Braille ballot papers and magnifying glasses were absent in several polling units I observed in Ogun and Delta states.

The violence recorded during the recent elections is unacceptable for a civilized country and should be condemned. Moreover, as the 2019 electoral season winds down, there is a need for a comprehensive review of how elections are conducted. From the logistical requirements, the training of election workers, the reliance on paper ballots to the security architecture, every detail must be examined. It would also be useful for the electoral management body to review informed recommendations from credible domestic and international observer groups in order to improve the framework for the conduct of future elections. Nigeria cannot permit a repeat of the inadequacies of the 2019 election cycle to occur again.



Election day scenes from across Nigeria including display of ballots by elections officials in Rivers State (top left), casting and counting of ballots, voting in Lagos (middle right), and voters checking voter lists in their ward.

Bottom right - U.S. Consulate Public Affairs Officer, Russell Brooks examining the brail ballot papers alongside the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner in Ogun State, Professor Abdulganiyu Raji, preparatory to the state gubernatorial and house of assembly elections.



All photos courtesy of U.S. Mission, Nigeria election observers. February 2019

CREDIBLE VOICES FOR

*THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN CIVIL SOCIETY
IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS*



NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY

Words by Olufunke Baruwa | Photos courtesy of YIAGA



Cynthia Mbamalu (right), YIAGA Africa Program Manager, explains the Watching the Vote Data Center results screen to Former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (center), leader of the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, with YIAGA Board Member Aisha Abdullahi (left).

lections observers agree that from civic engagement to domestic observation and conflict mitigation, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) supported by USAID proved to be a solid pillar upon whom Nigerians could rely as credible voices to hold government accountable to democratic promises and principles during the 2019 general elections.

As the election process unfolded, these groups joined together to mobilize citizens to go to the polls, advocate for adherence to democratic concepts and ideas, and candidly report on the process through real-time observations shared on social media and other platforms.

Several innovative approaches to election observation and reporting by CSOs defined the 2019 elections. These included: scaling up of the 'Situation Room' to provide pre-election analysis and to track the elections in real time as they evolved; establishment of a 'Gender and Election Watch' and a 'Content Aggregation System for Elections' that compiled real-time data during the polls; and forming a loose coalition that deployed thousands of citizen observers, and collected and analyzed all kinds of information on actions of voters, security personnel, election officials and candidates.

All told, CSOs brought together the highest number of domestic election monitors Nigeria has ever seen since the country's return to civilian rule two decades ago. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) accredited 120 domestic CSOs and 36 foreign observer groups, who fielded more than 7,300 observers overall.

Through long-time partners such as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), USAID supported leading civil society NGOs, among them YIAGA Africa, which conducted a critical national Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) to avouch the legitimacy of the official election results for the public.

Ahead of Election Day, YIAGA Africa deployed more than 3,000 observers to all of the country's 774 local government areas, and conducted the crucial PVT during both the presidential and National Assembly elections. Well before the polls, YIAGA Africa fielded long-term observers to assess the pre-election environment and anticipate issues likely to arise on Election Day and afterwards.

To collate the PVT, observer teams fed random samples of more than 1,500 polling units across every local government area into its 'Watching the Vote' National Data Center for a "quick count" tabulation. The international gold standard for citizen observation of elections, the quick count independently measured the quality of the Election Day processes and results, validating INEC's announced results.

"Without USAID support, these initiatives wouldn't have achieved the goal of building a national movement," said Cynthia Mbamalu, program manager for YIAGA Africa. "Citizens had a better understanding of the elections and the electoral process than ever before."

Ahead of the elections,

USAID supported the CSO-led #NotTooYoungToRun campaign that led to a historic constitutional amendment that reduced the age requirement to run for many public offices, inspiring hundreds of youth to stand as candidates at the national, state, and local levels.

Likewise, the Inclusive Friends Association (IFA) gave thousands of persons with disabilities a chance to vote through the 'Access Nigeria' campaign, which led INEC to develop materials for visually and hearing-impaired voters. The internally displaced – another extremely vulnerable group – received voter education and mobilization programs in several states as well.

"Access Nigeria and INEC made history," said Grace Jerry, executive director of IFA. "The level of assistance provided for voters with visual impairments was unprecedented."

Other groups helped voters understand the electoral environment and engage the public in that dialogue. The Situation Room provided analysis of new amendments to the Electoral Act, while the Policy and Legal Advocacy Center compiled and provided regular updates of regulatory changes that could affect the polls, all contributing to improved ability for the public to assess the quality of the process. The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund advocated for full participation of women both as voters and candidates while the Yar'adua Centre provided incident reports nationwide on voters, election officials and security personnel.



A key concern ahead of the elections was the potential for violence. A study of all 36 states by the CLEEN Foundation, an NGO that promotes safety, security, and justice, identified the major drivers of electoral violence, and identified "hot spots" across the country and established early warning and conflict mitigation networks that reported instances of political violence, especially in the restive northeast and middle belt regions.

To help curb electoral violence before it started, support for the #Vote Not Fight peace promotion campaign, led by entertainer and activist Innocent "2Baba" Idibia and 'Stop Violence Against Women in Politics' led by actress Stephanie Okereke Linus that promoted non-violent and positive youth engagement, peaceful participation the elections, and

engagement of women throughout the process.

Inevitable setbacks notwithstanding, the network of Nigerian CSOs proved that it is an essential player in Nigeria's journey toward a stronger democracy even as the final state elections mark the end of the 2019 cycle. By applying pressure for political reform and expanding the scope of citizen participation in the political process, their presence goes a long way to increase transparency and accountability in government.

By actively supporting the processes and institutions of political and electoral reforms and by expanding the inclusiveness in the electoral process, CSOs ensured a greater degree of integrity for the 2019 general elections. Their success bodes well for stronger, independent civil society engagement in future Nigerian elections.



BEYOND VOTING

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

By Sani Mohammed

*IN*igeria's 2019 general elections are the sixth such conducted since the country's return to democracy in 1999. And once again both the electorate and those elected must bear in mind that participation in the electoral processes involves much more than just voting or standing as a candidate.

The ultimate objective of a political contest should be the building of a nation where responsible individuals and institutions focus on supporting good governance; where parliaments and the courts check abuses of power and ensure the equal administration of justice under the rule of law; and where civic participation enhances the peoples' mandate.

There is no perfect election anywhere in the world. But every country must strive to minimize the challenges that inhibit a free, fair, transparent, credible, and peaceful electoral process which reflects the will of the people – the desired goal of democracy.

Commenting on Nigeria's democratic processes in a 2013 document, the UNDP noted that, "If elected officials do not really feel that they owe their positions to the electorate, they are unlikely to regard public service as the main reason for holding office." It followed up by saying "If office-holders do not believe they will be held accountable by the electorate for how they perform, then all the self-serving practices will be manifested."

According to the United Nations, Good Governance is measured by the eight factors of Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus Oriented, Equity and Inclusiveness, Effectiveness and Efficiency, and Accountability. These are principles ascribed to by all member nations.

- **Participation** requires that all groups, particularly those most vulnerable, have direct or representative access to the systems of government. This manifests as a strong civil society and citizens with the freedom of association and expression.
- **Rule of Law** is exemplified by impartial legal systems that protect the human rights and civil liberties of all citizens, particularly minorities. This is indicated by an independent judicial branch and a police force free from corruption.
- **Transparency** means that citizens understand and have access to the means and manner in which decisions are made, especially if they are directly affected by such decisions. This information must be provided in an understandable and accessible format, typically translated through the media.
- **Responsiveness** simply involves that institutions respond to their stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

- **Consensus Oriented** is demonstrated by an agenda that seeks to mediate between the many different needs, perspectives, and expectations of a diverse citizenry. Decisions need to be made in a manner that reflects a deep understanding of the historical, cultural, and social context of the community.
- **Equity and Inclusiveness** depends on ensuring that all the members of a community feel included and empowered to improve or maintain their wellbeing, especially those individuals and groups that are the most vulnerable.
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency** is developed through the sustainable use of resources to meet the needs of a society. Sustainability refers to both ensuring social investments carry through and natural resources are maintained for future generations.
- **Accountability** refers to institutions being ultimately accountable to the people and one another. This includes government agencies, civil society, and the private sector all being accountable to one another as well.

All these arguments are anchored on the need for good governance, the point being that – as the general elections cycle have been completed – the hard work begins for nation building.

HERO

noun

A person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.

Words by David Young | Photos by Olaoluwa Aworinde

There is nothing more sacred than a human life. A human life is very sacred whenever it's lost and it's a terrible tragedy whether that of a farmer, a herder, a Muslim, a Christian, a Berom or a Fulani. A loss of life is a tragedy. In the past two years, I have travelled thrice to Plateau, and also to Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, Edo and Niger States. And in each of these places I have seen the costs of the terrible violence that has touched so many people in rural parts of Nigeria. Innocence has been killed, communities torn apart, people displaced from their homes and families are mourning their loved ones. The U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Government and the American people condole with you in these tragedies you have suffered and we vow to work with you to end this kind of violence in the future.

At the same time as I have witnessed tragedy, I have seen people who work for peace. I have met those who've put their lives on the line to protect others in their community. I would like to introduce to you one of Nigeria's heroes, a very special person who has touched my life and indeed touched my heart in my visits last year to Plateau state. I would like to introduce to you the 83 year old chief Imam of Nghar village in Barkin Ladi LGA, Imam Abdullahi Abubakar. I'm going to tell you a story about this wonderful Imam and the lifesaving work he has done because I think many people in this country don't know about this extraordinary man.

It was about nine months ago that the village of Inyar was invaded by armed men. They came early in the morning on motor bikes armed with AK47's, machetes and with those machetes they killed people. They burned down houses. Of a village of one thousand people, 84 lost their lives. Women and men and children who perished because of the hatred and the evilness of young men who were misguided in their views of the world. But alongside this terrible tragedy, Imam Abdullahi Abubakar and his Fulani assistant did some extraordinary things. When people started shooting and hacking, people went running by the hundreds to save their lives and two hundred and sixty two people ran to the mosque of the town. They went inside, mostly



Chargé d'Affaires, David Young with Ishaku Abdullahi Abubakar, Imam Abdullahi's son and Mallam Adullahi Umar, Deputy Imam of the Nghar village mosque pose with Imam Abubakar

Christians and/or Berom and the Imam and his assistant Imam brought them into the mosque and shut the door. Imam Abdullahi brought people into his house next door and shut the door and they stood outside. As armed men came to their doors they said you cannot come in, you will have to kill us to go inside. Imam Abdullahi got down on his knees in the dust and pleaded with these armed men to turn away, to spare the lives of innocent people, and his community, his friends that he had known for years. Christians whom he had celebrated Christmas with as they had celebrated sallah with him. Because of their friendship and their commitment and their brotherhood and sisterhood, he risked his life and today more than 300 people are alive because those armed men turned away. I have rarely in my life of travelling to 80 countries met a man like Imam Abdullahi.

What I would like to say to you today is that those who work for peace, are not of one group or another. They are not just Muslim, they are not just Christian, they are not just from one group or state. They are individuals who stand up in their lives for good and to fight evil. Imam Abdullahi is a challenge to all of us. Think about what you do every day in your daily life. Do you take risk for peace, would

you put your life on the line to protect people from other communities? Think about what that means to us, to your country and to our world. The cycle of violence and attacks and reprisals and counter reprisals take horrific tolls on people in this state and both Christians and Muslims have been killed. That is a tragedy. But the reminder for us is that working for peace can save lives, and that is the most sacred thing in the world.

This is a very religious country. A country of faith where children of Abraham, brothers and sisters who follow two of the world's great religions Christianity and Islam submit themselves to God to worship and prayer each week, each day. And they submit themselves to work for peace and love and justice. But sometimes we see that there are people who really put their faith into action. For me that's a reminder that the most important thing we can do is to work for these eternal principles. My hope is that for all of us we can be worthy of the kind of sacrifice that these two Imams and many others who work for peace in Plateau state take regularly. I have heard these stories of different peace builders and my hope is that each of us can do our part to work for peace, to find common ground and to bring an end to the violence.

NIGERIA'S GENERAL ELECTIONS: THE YALI CONTRIBUTION

By Diran Adegoke

The last elections in Nigeria witnessed a wave of youth participation; young persons are poised to take their seat at the tables where decisions are made in Nigeria. 400 young persons took advantage of the recently enacted Not Too Young to Run Law to contest for office at various levels of government in just concluded general elections in Nigeria.

The YALI Network is a major influence among youth in Nigeria and members of the network volunteered en-mass to support the electoral process through the YALI Network NaijaVotes Campaign. The NaijaVotes campaign designed in line with short and long-term U.S. policy goals related to Nigeria's election, had three main goals:

- Boost voter participation and voting informed and with integrity (no vote selling)

- Encourage truth and accuracy in information-sharing (no fake news)
- Inspire communities to reject violence and hate speech

Some of the activities carried include rural outreach, road shows, production of jingles and videos that were shared on radio and social media, town hall meetings and debates with candidates, billboard campaigns, and visits to religious organizations, universities, and traditional rulers. The YALI Network hubs also collaborated with the USAID-funded #VoteNotFight program implementer, Youngstars Foundation to coordinate peace marches in each of Nigeria's 36 states for the program's National Day of Action.

To support their efforts the Embassy organized a virtual speaker program for 100 YALI Network members located in five American corners. The two retired

U.S. Congressmen who participated in the program spoke on the U.S. perspective on credible elections and voting rights, accountability and transparency, and legislator-constituents responsibilities.

The NaijaVotes campaign caught the attention of the Center for Democracy and Development in Nigeria who shared NaijaVotes messages and other content in its own election messaging campaign, and recruited members from YALI Network as volunteers for its election observer mission in 21 states.

While the fiercely contested election experienced some violence, experts said it was less than expected with many youth refusing to allow themselves to be used for violence, and awareness of fake news was noticeably higher while sharing of it was more contained. Voter registration rates were high but, by comparison, voting rates were low.



A YALI Network member during an outreach to Dutse Market, Abuja



Naija Votes billboard in Warri, Delta state

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST ELECTIONS

By Nengak Gondyi

Aspilos Foundation (AF) is implementing the Citizen's Platform project in Kano with support from U.S. Embassy Abuja's Public Affairs Section. The goal of the project is to increase youth participation in governance and democratic processes by providing young people with resources and a platform for engaging with public officials, especially at the local government level.

When AF began commenced this project in August 2018, many stakeholders doubted young people would be interested in a grassroots governance project as opposed to livelihood projects which they thought offered more immediate benefits. After a few sessions of the Citizen's Platform training however, word began to spread which increased participants' enrolment in the workshops. As of the date of this article, over 800 youths from all 44 local governments of Kano have participated in the five-day training workshops.

Following the trainings, participants have begun organizing at their local government level and strategizing how they can influence governance in their communities. Some participants have already led step-down knowledge sharing sessions in their communities, with additional sessions in the planning stages.

AF initially planned to organize townhall meetings to connect participants with local government officials to kick-start conversation on community governance. With the opportunity provided by the recently concluded 2019 general elections, however, the AF project team instead partnered with the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room to enable its volunteers



Volunteers from Tarauni and Ungogo LGAs, Kano strategize to address community challenges

to serve as "citizen observers" of the election. This meant they would vote while also recording incidents in their home locales to share with the Situation Room. This exercise helped expand observer coverage to more polling units than would have been feasible with accredited observers alone. Participant volunteers found the election observation experience richly rewarding as they were able to contribute towards successful electoral processes in their local communities. According to a volunteer in Kumbotso, Kano:

"I learnt that people really want good change and have made effort to see it happen. Now the people have understood that it is not about the party but the individuals contesting for office, so they voted for the individuals based on previous performance and competence and not the party"

With the long drawn-out elections in Kano now concluded, Aspilos Foundation is focused on building

its online platform to host reference materials and to provide a virtual community for citizens to engage with public officials. Aspilos Foundation is also planning to host the first in a series of town hall meetings. Townhall participants will thereafter take the lead in organizing and moderating other townhall meetings to engage with public officials while using a variety of tools to promote active citizenship.

What the Citizen's Platform has demonstrated in Kano is that there is a growing interest and enthusiasm among young Nigerians for governance at the grassroots level. When interested youths are trained and given the opportunity to network with their peers, they become vital assets in the development of their communities. It is now up to the youths of Kano to continue advocating for increased youth participation with the tools made available through the Citizen's Platform project. The Aspilos Foundation is looking to replicate this project in other states of the federation.



...TOWARDS ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC IN NIGERIA

By Halilu Usman

*I*n medicine to successfully resolve an ailment, we need to have the correct diagnosis; we need the patient's history, understand how the illness started, its progress, pinpoint its current state, and determine the best drugs or procedure to cure the disease. In most cases, the correct diagnosis determines the outcome of treatment.

The Nigeria HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAIIS) was set up to achieve an accurate diagnosis of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria from a public health perspective. To do this in a country of over 190 million people, spread across long distances and very difficult terrain, it required more than just a few individuals to make the correct diagnosis. NAIIS as the largest population-based HIV/AIDS household survey in the world brought many individuals and entities together, with the overall goal of providing Nigeria with accurate information regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The survey reached approximately 250,000 respondents in nearly 100,000 households and was completed in record time. This was done in spite of

geographic, infrastructure, logistics and security challenges that currently exist in Nigeria.

NAIIS was a national household-based survey that assessed the prevalence of HIV and related health indicators. Data collection was successfully completed in a very compressed period of time, July 2018 through December 2018, to ensure the data was available to utilize in the planning process for the provision of HIV treatment and prevention services in 2019. Data was collected from household members' ages 0-64 years old and confidential HIV counseling and testing services were provided to people who participated in the survey. All participants that were found to be HIV positive were linked to a health facility to enable them access to HIV services including free ARVs. NAIIS data includes national, zonal, and state information on HIV control activities in Nigeria.

The survey was initiated and led by the Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) and

the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), with financial support from the United States Government through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Technical guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was provided throughout the survey.

On Thursday, March 14, 2019, in a very colorful and educational ceremony, His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, formally announced the findings of the survey, marking the start of the dissemination of NAIIS results. The President enthusiastically welcomed the news that Nigeria had fewer people living with HIV than previously estimated. He also took this opportunity to launch the Revised National HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework 2019-2021, which forms the future response to the country's epidemic. The new national HIV prevalence measure is 1.4% and is more accurate than previous estimates, as it is based on an expanded population-

based household surveillance system and a revised methodology.

Commenting on the survey results U.S. Embassy Charge' d'Affaires, David J. Young, said, "The Nigeria HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey represents an extraordinary example of what can be achieved by working together." He also said, "The US Government looks forward to increased Government of Nigeria ownership and investment in the HIV response to ensure sustainability."

The Charge' commended the amazing commitment of field workers whether it was in the creeks of the South-South, the mountainous terrains in the North-Central, enduring the dusty weather of the semi-arid North-East, navigating treacherous rivers or dense mangroves in the South-West and the South-East, or traveling to the farthest distances of the North-West; he said, "individual sacrifices were made and long hours worked with the goal of improving the health of Nigerians. Survey staff traveled over difficult roads, slept in highly challenging locations, and encountered life-threatening

situations, all in their quest to ensure the government of Nigeria has accurate data that can be used to achieve HIV/AIDS epidemic control in Nigeria".

In his remarks, the CDC Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Mahesh Swaminathan, said, "NAIIS provides Nigeria and partners with accurate data, including HIV prevalence, viral load suppression, and the impact of preventing mother-to-child transmission services." He added, "CDC is proud to partner with the government of Nigeria and others to complete the survey. The encouraging results presented, along with ongoing monitoring and evaluation data will help the Government of Nigeria to intensify efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS to achieve epidemic control."

Since 2004, the US Government, through PEPFAR has invested approximately 5 billion US dollars in supporting Nigeria to achieve HIV epidemic control, including 70 million US dollars to support the conduct of the Nigeria HIV/AIDS Indicator and Impact Survey (NAIIS).



Dignitaries including Dr. Sani Aliyu, DG of NACA (2nd left), Muhammadu Buhari, president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (4th from left), Dr. Isaac Adewole, Health minister (centre) and David Young, Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Mission, Nigeria (far right) gather for a photo during the presentation of the NAIIS results

Black History Month

February 25 | UNILAG Radio Radio Appearance

Public Affairs Officer Russell Brooks was a guest on UNILAG Radio 103.1FM on Monday, February 25, as part of Consulate General Lagos' activities to commemorate 2019 Black History Month (BHM). A two-week program was organized in partnership with the University of Lagos to celebrate the BHM. During the interview, PAO Brooks emphasized the continued importance of Black History Month, not only for continental and diaspora Africans, noting that "people need to learn a lot more about the contributions of people of African descent to the development of modern civilization".



PAO Russell Brooks granting an interview at UNILAG FM to discuss the activities lined up for Black History Month



February 28 | U.S. Embassy, Abuja Interactive Panel Discussion

To support its Mission goals of building stronger ties between Nigeria and the United States, the U.S. Embassy Abuja on February 28, celebrated Black History Month featuring an interactive discussion themed "Building Bridges between Africa and the African Diaspora". The discussants Ms. Tanya Hill- U.S Embassy, Professor Abubakar Aliyu Liman, Dr. Rashidah Liman- ABU Zaria, and Professor Mabel Ewvwerhoma - University of Abuja spoke on topics which highlighted the sacrifice and contributions of Africans.

Ms. Tanya Hill drives home a point while other panelists look on

March 4 | University of Lagos Panel Discussion

The Institute for African and Diaspora Studies at the University of Lagos continued its Black History Month programming into March with a program befitting of Women's History Month, Black Feminism: Real or Imagined. The topic produced a riveting discussion in front of a capacity crowd on the role of African women in their societies and the challenges they face. Representing the Consulate, PAO Brooks highlighted the similarities to present-day debates in the USA.



L-R: Panel members, Dr. Irene Osemeka, Dr. Franca Attah, Dr. P. A. Akin-Otiko and 2011/2012 alumni of the Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence program, Professor Osita Ezenwanebe during the event



March 8 | U.S. Consulate General, Lagos Quiz Competition

In commemoration of Women's History Month, EducationUSA Lagos organized a quiz competition for four secondary schools located in Lagos and Ogun states. The event was opened by the Acting Consul General, Alice Seddon who delivered keynote remarks which noted various female trailblazers who have impacted positively on the world. The participating schools include: Corolla Secondary School Agbara, Greenspring School Lekki, Meadow Hall Lekki and DOWEN College Lekki.

Acting Consul General, Alice Seddon poses for a photo with the participating students

February 28 | NUC Auditorium, Abuja
Stage Play

The panel discussion was followed by a stage performance of Jeff Stetson's play *The Meeting (1987)* - about an imaginary meeting between Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - in collaboration with the department of theatre and performing arts of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The action takes place in a suite high up in a Harlem hotel, where Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. in a secret meeting, debate their differing approaches to improving the lot of African Americans in a predominantly white society.



Abdulaziz Attah and Nathan Kure portray Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X respectively during the theatre performance



Dr. Jamila Shu'ara speaking to the students during the event

March 28 | U.S. Embassy, Abuja
Speaker Program

EducationUSA Abuja hosted Howard University alum and former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education, Dr. Jamila Shu'ara, at this year's Women's History Month event. Dr. Shu'ara spoke on the need for girl-child education and women empowerment. In her lecture, she drew on her experiences schooling in the United States and how it prepared her to take on the challenges she faced as a woman in leadership positions.

Women's History Month



Fakkriyyah Hasheem, one of the panelists, addresses the audience

March 6 & 14 | U.S. Embassy, Abuja
Film Screening & Panel Discussion

On March 6 and 14th, 2019 PAS hosted a panel discussion exploring the issue of sexual harassment on college campuses and mechanisms for addressing it. Participants called for a comprehensive policy on sexual harassment at educational institutions. The discussion was moderated by Bella Anne Ndubuisi, Cultural Affairs Specialist, US Embassy. Panel discussants included Fakkriyyah Hasheem, founder of Arewa Me Too Movement; Dorothy Njemanze, founder, Dorothy Njemaze Foundation; Dr. Ganiyat Adeshina Uthman, Dean of Social Sciences, National Open University; and Dr. Ekundayo Ocholi, Director Center for Gender Security Studies and Youth Advancement.

April 4 | U.S. Embassy, Abuja

Panel Discussion on Sexual Harassment

On April 4, 2019, participants at a workplace sexual harassment panel discussion, organized by the Public Affairs Section, highlighted the need to strengthen laws that protect workers from workplace sexual harassment. Panelists at the discussion included Kay Crawford, Management Counselor, US Embassy Abuja; Joke Aliyu, Partner, Aluko & Oyebo; Hansatu Adegbite, Executive Director, WimBiz



A cross section of the panel; Hansatu Adegbite speaking

A MILLENIAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

By Moses Okoye

I call it just an election would be an understatement. On the 23rd of February 2019 Nigerians not only went out to vote but they also went out to be felt, to air their voices, and to entrust those they deemed capable of moving the country forward. It was a cauldron in which Nigerians irrespective of their differences were summoned and given a common mandate to be decision makers. In short it was a day for the Nigerian citizen.

I became a member of the Opportunity Funds Program under EducationUSA at the United States Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria in 2017 and my experience so far has been as educative as it has been eye-opening. I've not only been made to see solutions and opportunities in areas where I previously saw only problems but also to see the relevance of a solid education towards proffering workable solutions to pending problems. Thus during the February 23 elections, it was only natural for me to tilt in the direction of a candidate determined to champion the cause of education across the country and to place the spotlight on the people—the student, the petty trader, and the collar job holder.

Significant measures were taken by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigerian government in preparation for the National elections. Over 154,000 polling units were created across the country with the aim of easing the voting process. The Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC) also contributed its quota through its members who painstakingly helped facilitate the process not only in urban areas but also in highly inaccessible locations in rural areas. Security operatives were not left out of the exercise either. Over 500,000 uniform men comprising of officials from the Police, the Military, the Air Force, and the Navy were deployed to locations across the country. One might wonder why these many measures were taken for a day's exercise. Was it to ensure a hitch free process void of malpractice and voter manipulation; a process where the Nigerian will truly have his say in the leadership of his country? If so how successful were these measures in fulfilling their purpose?

The electoral process, I've learned, is a dish best served hot- pristine in its entirety with heavenly aromas

emanating, carried on the cleanest plates, and dished by the best cook. Just as he that eats the food has no say so in the cook's recipe, the leadership of a country has no say so in voter's choices on Election Day through whatever means. Election Day, to me, is that day when the ordinary man is illuminated and any attempt to hinder his illumination ultimately results in anarchy. As we move forward as a nation let's take a moment, a day, or even four years to look deeply in retrospect at those rumpled edges of past electoral processes and together let's straighten them in future elections. It is our mandate as a people.

The EducationUSA Advising Centers in Abuja and Lagos provide quality, timely, accurate, and unbiased information about all accredited U.S. higher education institutions for persons wishing to study in the United States. For more information about EducationUSA and study opportunities in the United States, please visit <http://www.educationusa.state.gov>



We asked a few Nigerians what they would like to see the newly re-elected administration accomplish within the next four years and these were their answers...

Develop basic infrastructure such as roads, railway, electricity, basic healthcare structures and academic institutions.

Jibrin, Field epidemiologist. 44

Improve coverage of Water Supply nationwide towards meeting up with SDGs.

Hassan, Civil Servant. 47

I will like to see our government in Nigeria facilitate and support youths and women in local production and manufacturing of technologies such as solar panels, biogas digesters and other simple renewable solutions.

Wunmi, NGO Director. 46

I would like the administration to take proactive steps towards institutionalizing gender equity in the security governance space.

Tolu, Program Officer. 25

In this re-elected administration, number one priority is restructure governance in Nigeria with regional/ zonal autonomy.

Irene, Professor. 61

I wish the elected persons place Nigeria on a fast developing path while ensuring a low carbon pathway so as to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Jonah, Civil Servant. 52

Repositioning of Education on a sound footing in Nigeria.

Fatima, Teacher. 50

I would like the administration to restore a national identity to Nigerians; one they would be proud of.

Wale, Clergy. 47

I'd like the new administration to completely resolve the riddle that has bedevilled the power sector and make power constant and available to help Nigerians take up the challenge of Industrialisation.

Akoji, Public Servant. 46

I will like the new administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to try and, if found guilty, jail some high profile looters of the Nigerian treasury.

Tajudeen, Journalist. 55

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